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Editorial

Robin Skeates

The General Editor

Durham University, UK

Welcome to the third issue of the *European Journal of Archaeology* for 2013. Here, you will find six general articles and eleven reviews. Below, I summarize and evaluate their significance to European archaeology.

Anthony Harding provides a critical and historiographical review of the use of World Systems Theory (also known as Core-Periphery Theory) in archaeology, with particular reference to the European Bronze Age. He criticizes this theory as primarily applicable to the capitalist world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries AD, as essentially economic, more descriptive than explanatory, vague in terms of defining cores and their peripheries, and a top-down approach. Instead, he advocates the use of an alternative ‘bottom-up’ approach, drawing upon increasingly fashionable network theory to emphasize the multiple connections of local societies in Bronze Age Europe and the importance of person-to-person interaction. This is an important paper, but where power fits into the story remains to be discussed, particularly given the Marxist foundations of World Systems Theory.

Kerkko Nordqvist and Vesa-Pekka Herva explore the early use of copper in Finland and the neighbouring Republic of Karelia (in Russia). They argue for its relatively early

origins, from c. 3900 BC, in the exploitation of native copper deposits of the Lake Onega region, and embed its development in a broader context of Neolithic reevaluation of the properties of mineral materials such as clay, slate and quartz. They also highlight the negative impact that contrasting traditions of archaeological research either side of the modern Finno-Russian border have had on the study of large-scale cultural processes in eastern Fennoscandia. Although some scholars will question the authors' acceptance of claims of early cereal cultivation in Finland, this paper is a welcome contribution to the study of early metal use in Europe, since it synthesizes a significant body of relatively inaccessible data.

Kristian Brink uses the example of a large concentration of Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age farms and houses in the Hyllie bog area of south-west Sweden to critique and enhance the established interpretative model of a stratified chiefdom-based society in Late Neolithic southernmost Scandinavia. With particular reference to house sizes, economic relations and burial locations, he accepts that this society was hierarchical and may have included chiefs. However, he argues that the society needs to be understood in more dynamic terms, with the temporary establishment of chiefdoms at around 2000 BC – at sites such as Almhov – generated by an interplay of the strategies of powerful individuals and collective strategies intended to create and maintain group solidarity. Overall, Brink draws upon an important new dataset to usefully nuance current discussions of social organization at the beginning of the metal age in this region.

Holger Wendling brings together the results of old and new research at the well-known late Iron Age *oppidum* of Manching in Bavaria (Germany), located on a former river course of the Danube. Challenging Manching's archaeological status as an archetypal example of a pre-Roman town north of the Alps, Wendling presents a model that emphasizes the dynamic and diverse character of urbanization at this and other sites in Central Europe. These include large unfortified centres involved in ritual activities, long-distance trade and

craftworking, from which the fortified *oppidum* of Manching developed. Although some scholars may wish to question Wendling's five archaeological criteria used to identify four (low through to strong) levels of urbanization, his article does provide a valuable overview of an *oppidum* site of European-scale importance.

Tom Moore and his international team of colleagues extend one of Wendling's themes, by examining the chronology and role of Late Iron Age and early Roman unenclosed settlements in central-eastern France, with particular attention to an example located around the source of the river Yonne, close to the famous *oppidum* of Bibracte in the Morvan. Like Wendling, they argue for variability in settlement and social trajectories at the end of the Iron Age. However, they also question the conventional evolutionary model of settlement in central and eastern France – from Late Hallstatt hilltop sites, to La Tène C lowland open settlements, to La Tène hilltop *oppida*, to lowland Roman towns – referring to evidence of the contemporaneity with *oppida* of a complex array of unenclosed 'agglomerations', including the large 'suburb' of Sources de Yonne. This interesting perspective, borne out of new fieldwork, contextual interpretation and critical thinking, represents a major contribution to Late Iron Age studies that could set the agenda for future research into settlement dynamics around other focal sites in Europe.

Sarah Semple and Alexandra Sanmark present the first results of a HERA-funded research project on assembly practices in later prehistoric and medieval north-west Europe. This is combining the study of documentary records (of gatherings such as the medieval *thing*) and place-names with old and new archaeological fieldwork at meaningful places in the landscape, ranging from communal 'cooking-pit sites' to 'courtyard sites'. They highlight the diversity of assembly places, architecture and practices, their role (together with elites) in constructing collective identities, and the connections between human burial and assembly.

This is a valuable comparative study, which will hopefully foreshadow the identification of more detailed patterns of assembly over space and time as the project progresses.

In the reviews section, there are discussions of fifteen new books, including four exhibition catalogues, of significance to European archaeology. We begin with Alasdair Whittle's encouraging review of a book that shows how an archaeology of religion is both desirable and possible. Next, there is praise for a book that critically evaluates the benefits and problems of computer simulations in archaeology. For prehistorians, a volume providing an up-to-date overview of the colonization of some Mediterranean islands is reviewed. Romanists are encouraged to look east, to the first major report on excavations at the Roman temple complex at Horvat Omrit in Israel. And medievalists are introduced to three interesting new books on: religious change in early Medieval Europe, Viking period silver economies, and medieval Coventry in England. Next comes a *festschrift* that fittingly celebrates the career of Erzsébet Jerem, who, amongst her many professional commitments, is a member of the *EJA*'s Editorial Board. Mark Hall then provides a very interesting review of four recent exhibitions and their catalogues and a monograph that explore play, and especially the archaeological evidence for board games, in which he emphasizes the conceptual linkage between play and religion. We then end with reviews of two books about archaeology in the modern world: the first about the commodification of archaeology in the public domain, the second seeking to rally support to protect Italian cultural heritage and landscapes at a time in which developers and politicians have other interests in mind.

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